

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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STRANGE WATERS.

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BOOK I.

CHAPTER IV. CUCUMBERS, AND OTHER GOURDS.

I BEGIN to fear that the Earldom of Quorne is assuming uncomfortable dimensions, considering that hitherto it is but a shadow. It is time to see what lay inside.

Considered as a shadow, it was very large indeed—so large as well-nigh to overshadow a considerable portion of the entire county, of which the city of Winbury is the capital. Such had been the case for many generations. The Mordants, Earls of Quorne, had, no student of the peerage need be told, come in with the Conqueror, and had contrived to stay where they had settled, through all the vicissitudes of the history of England. They had always been distinguished for a singular absence of dangerous qualities; they were the most negative family in the whole of the United Kingdom. They had been famous neither in the armies nor in the councils of their sovereigns; nobody had ever feared them, and therefore nobody had ever injured them. Like their own peaches, they lived on the laziest and sunniest side of the wall.

Hinchford—Viscount Hinchford was the second title of the house—was the principal seat, and quite a show place in its way. It was of a not unfamiliar pattern. The house itself was built very large and very low, as if the architect had been careful to observe, literally as well as metaphorically, the tastes of a family famous for making itself comfortable on its own soil, and with a rooted objection to going up-

stairs. Palladian, I think, was the name of the style; at least the County Histories called it so, dwelling lovingly upon its fluted columns and the exact dimensions of its architraves. Along the many-windowed front ran a long terrace with a stone balustrade, with a broad flight of quasi-marble steps descending from the centre, and pots of shrubs along the coping, after the fashion of Versailles, to which the same County Histories never failed to compare Hinchford. There was a home-park and a deer-park. The interior was arranged for comfort as well as for luxury; and there were gardens and greenhouses that formed its crowning glory. There never were such peaches and nectarines, as grew on those walls, nor such strawberries as grew on those beds, even when it rained—as Jenny of The Five Adzes had tested for at least once in her days. Every Earl of Quorne had his taste. It was invariably respectable, and ranged from connoisseurship in old port and its ensuing gout, to black-letter learning and its consequent—say wisdom. Horticulture was the ruling passion of the present, and eleventh, Earl of Quorne.

He was a dapper little man of middle age, who ruled one whole fifth part of the county, and served a gardener from the Lothians. There was a time of his youth when he had held the Queen's commission as a lieutenant in the Coldstreams; but he had never obeyed his colonel with the docility he displayed towards plain Alexander Ferguson. He had his reward. He invariably carried off the first prize for peaches at the county flower show; and he lived on his gardener's glory for the rest of the year. What gold, not merely of sunshine, was melted in the crucible

must remain untold. It is doubtful if Mr. Ferguson himself could tell; that he never did tell is beyond contradiction.

Such was the Earl of Quorne; and he was a happy earl. But once a year he was unhappy—from the beginning of May to the middle of July—and the worst of it was that this was just the most critical time of the whole year for the fruit garden. While he was away, who could tell what unseasonable frost might not deprive him of the first county prize?

But it was destiny. As far as Mr. Ferguson was greater than the earl, so was the countess greater than even Mr. Ferguson.

Apart from their being earl and countess, a relationship which renders it unnecessary to account for any sort of marriage, there was every reason why these two should have come together. Though their hobbies pulled hard in diametrically opposite ways, the fact that each had one may be assumed sufficient to create a bond of sympathy, if not of union.

The Countess of Quorne was in truth a very great lady; indeed she was the daughter of a Marquis of Horchester. But, by a singular caprice—or what would be singular if it were not otherwise—Nature had given her the heart of a thorough-bred Bohemian. I do not mean there was anything wrong about her. Nobody ever breathed or dreamed such a thing of the Countess of Quorne. But her tastes were eminently unsuited to the cultivation of peaches. She looked up to the painters, poets, and musicians who looked up to her. She loved London at peach-blossom and strawberry time, not for the sake of the season, but for the sake of the artistic hangers-on of the season. She loved the atmosphere of the studio, and longed to be a man that she might go behind the scenes. As things were, she was obliged to bring behind-the-scenes into her own drawing-room.

Noblesse oblige; and, after all, she was Countess of Quorne. She could not dispense with her title any more than with her diamonds. So she performed all needful social duties with the utmost dignity and propriety. But during the day she was more often to be found in the workshops of national galleries and anti-national galleries, watching the painting of the pot here and of the kettle there, than at garden parties and such like Philistine doings. She liked sitting for

her portrait. About twenty of her were hung at Hinchford; and very seldom indeed an Academy Exhibition opened without at least one portrait of the Right Honourable the Countess of Quorne. She had a box at both opera houses, and envied the gods in the gallery.

Of course she herself could do a little of everything. She could paint—at least, she did paint—and that with like merit in every style. Landscape, portrait, genre, history, fancy, caricature, were all one to her. She could—at least she did—compose. There, indeed, her field was more limited; she mostly set ballads of which she herself wrote the words—for she was a poet as well as painter and composer. She had published a volume of poems, of which the title matters not, under the nom de plume of *Aspasia*, that she might not be confounded among the common herd of royal and noble authors. Her choice of nom de plume did not say much for the classical scholarship of a lady at once so talented and so respectable, but, nevertheless, she was a classical scholar, and had travelled through half a *Dialogue of Plato* in the footsteps of Lady Jane Grey.

But, though catholic and cosmopolitan both in her tastes and in her accomplishments, she had her caprices and her favourites, like other people. She was terribly strict with regard to women. No prima donna, however distinguished, could hope, save by the passport of the most notorious decorum of manners, to gain a foothold in the house of Lady Quorne. With men it was different; and it was observed that, in her opinion, the better the face the better the painter, or the better the tenor, baritone, or bass, as the case might be. She had no children, and freely exercised her maternal instinct on promising, bright, and handsome young men, so long as they could make a blur with a brush, or stumble through a song, but always so long as they were not of the army of amateurs. For these—being a woman of natural sound sense—she had a mortal aversion. Amateurs, even of opposite sexes, do not love amateurs; and, in addition to all her other accomplishments, Lady Quorne could herself sing the songs she herself wrote to the music she herself composed.

Thus it was certainly not strange that she should have made the acquaintance, in some studio or other, of Walter Gordon, who did not call himself an amateur, and was obviously capable of painting her face

to admiration, on the strength of having a good-looking face of his own.

All was arranged for her giving him a sitting for her thirty-third portrait at Quorne-house in Park-lane, when a telegram came to the earl from no less a person than Alexander Ferguson at Hinchford. It ran as follows:

"Largest cucumber on record. Mr. Plowman."

What was to be done? It was enough to make a saint—much less a mortal earl—swear. A man must have an ambition, after all; and the Earl of Quorne's was to raise a larger cucumber than Mr. Plowman of Mellington, a not distant neighbour in the same county. The earl was facile princeps in wall-fruit; but to Mr. Plowman of Mellington he could not hold a candle in cucumbers. Nevertheless, where there is a will, there is a way. Mr. Ferguson had *carte blanche*—and used it thoroughly. To such purpose did he employ the margin, that this very year the earl's cucumber-frames contained at least three cucumbers bigger than the biggest at Mellington. It was a grand and proud moment for Lord Quorne when the news arrived in Park-lane. But the spirit of rivalry between the competitors seemed to have infected the gourds themselves. There was one unnoticed, unsuspected cucumber at Mellington—a very dark horse, to use a somewhat violent metaphor—that one sunny day felt called upon to assert the honour of the Plowmans. Unsuspected it grew and grew, till it first distanced its neighbours and its rival.

What was to be done, indeed? Here it was, in mid-season, with my lady's painters, poets, and fiddlers in full career, and meanwhile, the battle of the gourds would be lost for want of a general!

There are people who, when they hear of an earthquake, say, at any rate with their hearts, "Ah, it would never have happened if only I'd been there." Such people have an immense faith in the virtue of the master's eye—and it may be, where the servant is the real master, not entirely without reason. Quis custodiet custodes?—Mr. Alexander Ferguson might watch nature very well, but who was to watch Mr. Alexander Ferguson?

Now, when two hobbies come in collision, it is clear that one of the two must give way. The countess did not choose, any more than the earl, that she should be left to do all the honours of the season by

herself in the house in Park-lane, and he did not choose to go into the country and watch a cucumber-frame alone. And when these collisions happened, it was invariably the earl who had his way. The narrower the idea, the more certain it is to win. So, in mid-season, the entire household, bag and baggage, left Park-lane, the studios, and the theatres, to enjoy the country in its season, which perversely enough persists in refusing to postpone itself till after the session. Parliament did not miss Lord Quorne; and indeed, in endeavouring to grow the largest cucumber on record, he was doing quite as much service to his country as many of his peers whom he left behind him.

But there is one advantage about being a countess—even though she be eccentric enough to leave town at its fullest, she need never be at a loss for material wherewith to set up a season of her own. For awhile, Hinchford became an offshoot of London. And, when the London season was over, it continued at Hinchford.

For instance, there was no earthly reason why the thirty-third portrait of the Countess of Quorne should not be painted just as well at Hinchford as within the atmosphere of the Royal Academy. Better, indeed; for the countess would be made independent of appointments, which as a lady she kept, but as a Bohemian abhorred, by having the painter at her elbow. I will not go so far as to say that Walter Gordon was displeased at receiving an invitation to Hinchford. I will not even say that he did not give himself an extra air or two on the strength of it, among his friends. He did not remember having sneered a little, a year ago, at Lady Quorne's choice of her portrait-painter last year. On the contrary, he took his piece of good fortune honestly, and without mock modesty—as, on the whole, a man should do.

That was how he came to spend a night in Laxton; for he always preferred his feet to any other sort of conveyance, whenever he had time.

There was one advantage about Hinchford. The character of its mistress made it possible for a man to arrive at its doors in any way he pleased. And, once within its doors, the guests altogether did very much as they pleased. It was not Bohemia, but it was as near an approach to that country, so beloved by those who know it not, as can be contrived by anyone who can afford to spend all at once more than

half-a-crown. Very few really great people were ever found there. Lady Quorne, with the zeal of an amateur Bohemian, which is to the real, simple thing as wine is to milk-and-water, preferred strange to home waters. Thoroughbred Bohemians thought her a little crazy; and would very much have preferred the great people as well as the flesh-pots of Philistia—which she freely gave them.

The many descriptive accounts, locally published, of Hinchford and its neighbourhood called the latter "pastoral." Walter Gordon found it dull, and no doubt it was dull, and was not pastoral. Winbury lay on the right side of the line of low hills, and Hinchford on the wrong, for beauty. But it was a pleasant walk, though rather heavy for the feet after the rain—just heavy and just long enough to raise a quest of strawberries into the regions of chivalry, and no more.

Of course, as it was an unknown country to Walter Gordon, there was an exceptional profusion and confusion of cross roads, each with its signpost, which, however, as a matter of course, invariably refused to point the way to Hinchford, giving ample and superfluous guidance to every place in the county, from Winbury downwards, where Walter Gordon did not want to go.

"To Winbury, to Laxton, to Wilkey, to Grandon— Sir, will you be so good as to tell me— Holloa! Why, Gaveston?"

He had been addressing a parson, in the most orthodox of clerical costumes and white collars, and with a long pair of whiskers.

"Gaveston! who would ever have thought of meeting you here?"

"Why, Gordon?"

"Ah, then you are Gaveston! After all, when I come to think of it, there's no reason why two people shouldn't meet anywhere. Last night I had a much more unexpected meeting. But I didn't know you were going into the Church, old fellow. I always thought fast bowling more in your line. Are you fixed in this country? I must come and look you up before I leave, and have a talk over old times."

The two young men were of about the same age; but were made to be contrasted in other respects than in the matter of costume. But there is no need to dwell on that point; we remember Reginald Gaveston, and we know Walter Gordon.

A long series of Dorcas meetings had increased the air of wisdom suggested by every hair in the whiskers of the ex-cricketer; while every trace of Oxford had been rubbed away from the more cosmopolitan Walter.

"I live at Winbury; I'm curate of St. Anselm's there," said Gaveston. "I suppose you're at the bar?"

"No; your chances of getting a chancellor's living are gone, if you were counting on my being on the woolsack. By Jove! I've been so many things since Oxford that I wonder you know me. I hardly know myself at times. Well, extremes do meet. You're here because you're a parson, and I because I'm a travelling painter. Do you know, I should like to hear you preach a sermon, Gaveston?"

The curate coloured; but whether from pleasure at a possible compliment, or from an uncomfortable sense that Walter's desire might be connected with certain oats sown at Oxford a little inconsistent with sermonising, is hard to say.

"I mean it," said Walter. "You would preach a splendid sermon if you haven't forgotten how you used to bowl. I shall come to Winbury on Sunday. Which way are you going now?"

"I am for the present at Hinchford, Lord Quorne's place, you know. But we shall be extremely glad to see you if you are passing by Winbury."

"Why, then you are the very man for me! But—we? What tale does that tell?"

"I'm married, you know," said Mr. Gaveston—not, Walter thought, with quite so much satisfaction as he had spoken of his visit to Lord Quorne.

"Married? Well, there's more change in you than there is in me, after all. It's quite clear I must come to Winbury. I must know Mrs. Gaveston. You've got on farther in life than I have. So you're going to Hinchford too? But, excuse me, Gaveston—I didn't know you had any of Lady Quorne's Open Sesames. I'm to paint her portrait—what are you to do?"

"I am to dine and sleep," said the curate of St. Anselm's.

It must not be supposed that Walter Gordon and Reginald Gaveston had ever been special friends, even at Oxford. Nor was it likely that the curate, now grooved down into Winbury and caught and tamed, was exactly overjoyed at meeting with so thorough-paced a Bohemian as his old

acquaintance seemed to boast of being. The pleasure of meeting was all on Walter's side, who was always glad to meet an old face—next to meeting a new. And no doubt marriage may change a man. He might have been very glad to meet Walter anywhere but in his own country, where he would not be expected to give him a bed and ask him to dinner.

However, in one respect Walter Gordon was decidedly thick-skinned—or rather honest experience had gone far to prove to his own satisfaction that his company could not be less agreeable to others than to himself. And that, at any rate, is one great secret of the art of pleasing. And another was, that he never found anybody dull. He could always listen enough for one, and talk enough for two. During the walk from the signpost to the lodge-gate of Hinchford, he had talk for at least one and three quarters. Reginald Gaveston was a very brilliant man in Winbury, but he did not come up to his reputation on the road to Hinchford.

And yet—and yet—how is that to be said of Walter Gordon of which he was utterly unaware, and could scarcely be said even unconsciously to feel? He was the same, while trying to talk nonsense very hard to his old college acquaintance, as he had always been; and yet that evening and morning at The Five Adzes had practically cut his life in two. His adventure, even in these few hours since, had well-nigh passed out of his mind, except as an amusing anecdote which, with a few humorous touches of his own, might serve to make up a story to tell hereafter, including the idyll of the strawberries. Nothing had happened but trifles. But he knew, if without reflection or even conscious feeling one can be said to know, that an influence was upon him. It might be accompanied by dislike, by contempt even. Childish caprice, selfish ill humour, insatiable hunger for the admiration even of bores, and a hundred similar things, had all been displayed openly before him, and all the more glaringly by reason of the barrenness and poverty of the back-ground. The ill humours he had seen would have lost their point in a loftier atmosphere; in an appropriate air, they would have been invisible. He had seen a woman turning trifles into tragedies to suit her humour; she might have turned tragedies into comedies; it was the intense nature of the woman that he had seen, so intense as to need no conditions or circumstances

for its display. And there had been no barrier between herself and her influence. Nothing had distracted his whole attention from her; she and her moods, her eyes, and her voice, had filled up the whole of life for a while. There had been a sort of fascination, even in the constant suspense as to what she would next do or say. And he who has once been under the spell of an intense will, however idly exercised, can never be quite the same as before—there is something new in him. The world contains a new human life for him. In a word, he might dislike, or even despise; but the world with Clari in it could never be the same as the world without Clari. He might never see her again; he might, and no doubt would, forget her, save as a piece of comedy; but she would always be there. Perhaps, it is wrong after all to say of such natures that they fascinate. They electrify.

But did all this come wholly from her, or did it need something in him to work upon? Would the same magnetic force have struck through the shell of the Reverend Reginald Gaveston, or turned Lord Quorne from watching his favourite cucumber through his own private spectacles and saying, "It grows?"

EARLY WORKERS.

PRINTING.

THEY do their printing in a chapel? Yes; and this is quite right, little chaps as they are, in tunics of dark gray frieze, and trousers of lasting corduroy. In addition, all mature and big printers, do their printing in a chapel; and this again is quite right also. It is because of that chapel, or chapel-house, otherwise almonry, at Westminster, in which Caxton began his foreign-learned and freshly-imported Mechanick Handiwerke of Printing. For four centuries has this had graceful reminiscence. Caxton had a chapel placed at his disposal in which to deal his golden death-blow to scrivenage, in which to show monks and friars, hurrying from their missal-making across the cloisters wonderingly, by what means their fair art of missal-making was to be sapped of its life for ever. And to this day every building, no matter its size, its shape, its locality, in which Early Workers (and others) do their printing, has, in some method or another, the name of chapel clinging to it still. Though the name of chapel is beginning to lose, with

some, its original meaning of a place, it still means everywhere the company of printers who work in it, who make their own laws, enforce their own fines, elect and eject according to their own judgments and predilections; and as this sort of chapel is presided over by a chief, and this chief is a father, does not the old abbey life, with the old priestly cowl pervading it, linger in this quite as much as is needed? Further, if little Early Workers (or others) by accident print words and letters too pale, such words and letters are called friars, white friars, it will be perceived; and if little Early Workers (or others) print words and letters too black, such words and letters are called monks; which again carries our thoughts back Caxton-wards.

Now, the Early Workers at printing, under present examination, are other examples of the children called half-timers. They are kept at their schooling for one government attendance of about three hours daily; with teaching efficiently performed; with exceptionally tasteful music refining it; with animal sympathies kept wholesomely alive by the (non-compulsory) attendance of a great black dog, to bask before the fire where the fire is hottest, and wag his tail at judicious intervals; and they are kept at their trade for the remainder of the available day, amounting, when the necessary divisions of it are pieced together, to some five good hours. They do their work excellently. They stand in the midst of their productions, hung up as an economical and advertising mode of wall-decoration; and since these productions are gigantic "broad-sides," with gigantic letters designed to startle and attract, he who runs may read. There is Somebody's Celebrated Jamaica Ginger-beer—as an example—in remarkably lively blue; the ginger of it prodigious, the Jamaica of it modest, as probably it is in the composition, after precisely the same proportion; with the big blue bottle of it accurate and full life-size, its label, cork, wire, and chiar'-oscuro perfect. There is Life in the Arctic Regions in faint icy green; the letters smeared and slipping sideways, and shivery, to give the effect of snow. There is Mr. Somebody's professional name in bewitching pink; the scenes and cities he is to lecture upon in pink also; the dissolving views that are to illustrate him going back to unpresumptuous green; the pence that are to be paid for seeing him being printed

very little, so that very little may be thought of them. There is a Welsh Girl put prettily into brown; with all the history of how she is a ship that will sail with emigrants somewhere, on such a day, for so much, put prettily into brown to match her. There are Mr. Somebody's Coffee and Dining Rooms gone cheerfully into blue again; with large cups of coffee, and small cups of coffee, and rashers of bacon, and eggs, and bloaters, blue, everyone; and with "hot joints daily" thrust at the bottom, into such renewed conspicuousness and colour, they must be extra aggravation to little Early Workers condemned to print them, and not to eat them, since the small people know all the while, moreover—for their handy-work proclaims it—that the joints will be ready enticingly from twelve till two. To these must be added the fine ship Enmore, in mercantile black; the Tobago A 1, in the same mercantile respectability; some school-board election canvassing posters, equally as self-restrained; a variety of bills of auctions, concerts, charitable dramatic performances, and here and there allusion to San Fernando, Trinidad, the Asphodel; to such wines as Steinberg, Rudelese, Moët, port; to an interesting evening sale of furniture, where, considering the locality (London's far East) and that the goods were seized in distraint for rent, it is eminently satisfactory to find bedsteads, feather beds, carpets, rugs, and so on, warranted to be quite good and — clean. Think of little Early Workers doomed to pass five hours of each day with such alluring surroundings!—whilst Caxton would have been put off with stained and tattered tapestry. Think that they twist out of their machine—turning the handle laboriously to do it—nice little circumstances, such as that meat and potatoes can be had for sixpence, that stews and hashes are the same price, that puddings can be had "various," from a penny to a groat, that morning and evening papers are taken in, that there are early breakfasts at five o'clock, and (at the same establishment) board and lodging for gentlemen! It is easy to imagine how the little fellows might long to be gentlemen, able to have such savoury board and convenient lodging at their choosing, able to have such an expanse of newspapers—from other printers' setting up, other printers' locking, other printers' attention to a machine—to get the news out of, if news-getting

were their whim, or to push aside languidly, if they were weary and disinclined. But these Early Workers at Printing, unhappily, have not many of the qualities and tendencies that distinguish gentlemen born, or out of which gentlemen can be very surely self-made. They are here, under the same roof with their little brethren the compositors,* because, like them, they are vagrant, lazy, untrained; because they have sad propensities to childish untruthfulness, petty theft, and deception, quite beyond the control of parents almost as untrained as themselves. They are here, also—others of them—because they are simply ownerless and poor; certain to pick up vagrancy and evil, and to weave out the chain of vagrancy and evil farther and farther on, if no power kindly took them, and decreed they should be rightly drilled. The same as with other scholars—and these cost only a wide total of seven shillings a week each, for shelter, clothing, food, incidentals, and both instructions—school fare is all the content at present afforded them: and, no more than if they were scholars paid for on a far richer and grander scale, they have not even free ingress and egress in and out of school-gates and walls. But, for all this, there is no occasion that Early Workers at Printing should despair. They are only six years under tuition at the utmost, and may be only four, according to age when received; during the course of these years, a well-behaved boy is sure to have his good behaviour noted, since it cannot fail to make its mark. These well-behaved boys have the privilege, also, of being sent out, "on licence," as young journeymen, if masters should apply for them; and, in either case, a boy has his future all hopeful and clearly tracked. He who goes outside has a conduct-card sent with him by the governor, and if he brings this card back, marked G for good by his master, on every day when he returns, in that is all that is needful; and, just as with the boy who is all right at home, he may reckon on being a gentleman at some near or distant day—provided he keeps to this capital G for good when he is his own superintendent and governor, and when, from then, henceforth, he takes his place in the world, the receiver of his own pay for the work he has himself done, at large and free.

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 19, p. 29, "Early Workers."

These little Early Workers at Printing are wanted in a sharp quartette for each machine. There has to be the top-boy, called the layer-on, who lays the sheet of paper upon the grippers; there has to be the medium little man, called the taker-off, to take away the paper when the impression has been made; there are the two little fellows who turn the prodigious handle that makes the wheels creak and move, who might just as well be turning a mangle, and who want nothing but endurance and good strength of spine. Another press under the hand of these Early Workers is the more antique Stanhope. This press, of the sort that folds over its lid, as it were, upon hinges, and that, to print, has to be shut up like a box or a bagatelle-board, with forme, paper, and all contents hidden entirely away, requires different divisions of labour in working it; but whether the Early Workers are busy at the old press or the new, they become inky enough to be known by that generic term "devil," otherwise "spirit," otherwise "fly," each one meaning the same blackness and smallness, the same impish pliancy and agility. Whether, also, the young Early Workers are busy at the old press or the new, much noise comes with their young working. The press creaks, the press grates, the press grumbles; some movements of it are heavy, some swaying, some have a click. When a room is full of active little Early Workers—at a "spurt," let it be said, over a "lost" bill suddenly required; or over some parochial squib intended to decide an election of guardians at some hot moment—this noise has extra life in it; and the name that used to be given to it—among adult workers, it is now meant, implying a busy season—was The Music of the Presses. Early Workers have never been told of this, in this early stage that is all they have reached; but in the quaint words of William Savage: "When a master-printer hears the creaking of the heads, the thumping of the balls, the noise of the running in and out of the carriage, and all the other miscellaneous, and, to unaccustomed ears, discordant noises," why, the heart of the master-printer rejoices, Savage goes on to say; and at all printers' dinners and suppers, in all chapels everywhere, The Music of The Presses was ever a standing toast. Early Workers have never been told of this, it was said—no; for balls, for instance, in a printing-office, have long been bowled entirely out of fashion;

rollers take their place in the presses the little people fill with their circulars, and trade-lists, and programmes, and shipping notices; but if the boys ever heard as much, and were told, also, the other dying-out names applied to parts of printing-presses, the whole of them strung together would make a very strange collection. A press, it may just be said (for the oddity), used to be made out to be furnished with a head, feet, cheeks, ribs, face, shanks; to be furnished with cramps, winter, and (quite intelligibly, as a sequence) a coffin; with garter, hose, bed, blanket, bolster—to try and atone for the winter, it is clear. It is not astonishing, after this, to find that the presses of former days were said to squabble, to slur, and to mackle. It seems quite mild behaviour, leaving only the wonder that they were not guilty of a great deal more. Neither is it astonishing, at the end of all this similarity to life, and at the hearing of the noise of it, and at the sight of the smear of it (for the Early Workers are still busy, turning, crunching, and taking off—they stay for no reflection on history or archæology) to find that compositors, in the pride they feel at the superior intelligence required for their own department, call the pressmen's place a piggery, call the pressmen themselves pigs, and enliven their own composing work by giving a pig's grunt whenever a pressman enters their dominions. It is true that much pressmen's work in large cities is carried on in dark and unwholesome places, of which the word pigsty is quite descriptive, and to which it is only too appropriate; but it is excellent to be able to record that no such idea fits into the printing-office of the Early Workers of this sketch at all. They have good wide windows to admit a bright cheering light upon their big blue, and black, and green, and scarlet lettering, as it clothes their walls; there is a good open space of playground, for them to look out upon, and get fresh air from; there is a large sweep above the playground of uninterrupted sky. If their presses, in their queer phraseology, really have "cheeks," they can see every blush that comes to warm them; if their presses, in actual fact, do have "coffins," they can decipher all the floriated scrolls and letters engraved upon the "plates." "Pigeon-holes" is the name for the wide white spaces left between words by poorly-planned composing, and these Early Workers are not deterred by gloom or dark-

ness from detecting each one. The byword for the "imprint," or printer's name and address, that must be affixed to all matter printed (with some few exceptions), used to be "Mr. Pitt's mark," since that statesman was at the helm when the Act passed, and his name, with much political, seditious, and covert meaning, clung to it; and the little Early Workers, as they take their sheets clean off the grippers, can read "Mr. Pitt's mark" clearly, with no need to peer, or pore, or "try their eyes," to do it. It is the same in the building where the Stanhope press effects its "issues." If matter "falls out"; if such an ornament as the "brass-rule" that forms the double "Oxford framing" round the present page had not been locked in quite level; if "monks" or "friars" stalk in, or are seen to be gliding out, the light streams down abundantly for the Early Workers to discover the whole—supposing, that is, they could stop their press for the scrutiny, and supposing that it was in scrutiny that their duty lay. There is a large paper-cutting machine, too, close at hand, with which the boy-printers prepare their "sheets." It might be a deadly guillotine, with that terrible slice down it gives to elephant, to pott, to double-pott, &c.; and the young Early Workers can see every detail of the execution their sharp manipulation brings about, and can be delighted and encouraged by its directness and neat accuracy. How different is this to the chapel of William Caxton! There the thick-built walls, with sloping cut at only rare intervals to lead to the narrow open slit, allowed only semi-darkness everywhere, except at the hours and seasons when the sun poured in, focussed, with almost detrimental glare. And a little later on, when Richard the Third succeeded Caxton's own king, Edward, when Henry the Seventh and Henry the Eighth followed, and printing, extending itself, had grown out so that it was obliged to have larger buildings and more "practisers," even by then all the light that civilisation had learnt to get was crampingly little. There were windows, it is true; but—like for lords and commons, yeomen, other artificers, and the rest—the windows of printing-offices were of the pressmen's own familiar paper; and it can be pictured how very unfair was the light that could creep in through those. And there was to be no candle burnt to better this, except in certain months in the year, by Medean

chapel law—a chapel, it may be explained, being rigidly papal in constitution, as it had been papal by birth and fostering; it could do no wrong, and could submit to no demur. At Bartholomew-tide a journeyman might have the comfort of a candle—not an hour sooner. At Bartholomew-tide, too, which comes at the end of the year, when daylight lessens and fogs grow, and when any help to seeing becomes doubly valuable, journeymen had to renew their paper windows; had to tear out the old weather-stained and weather-tattered paper, and to paste in new—making the little Early Workers amongst them do it, most likely. And, thinking of this dimly-lighted period—getting into it, as it were, with its strictly-limited candle-lens and curiously-autocratic power—contrasting it, too, with the light and bright circumstances under which the Early Workers carry on their operations; is it at all wonderful that old superstition reigned in the old time, and that a ghost was thought (and felt) to haunt every printing-chapel, with definite influence and work for its ghostly doing? The ghost was there—let the wonder come or not. Its name was Ralph; its mission was to ensure by supernatural agency (or repute) that the ordinations of the father of the chapel were unfalteringly carried out. Its subjects were all the members of a chapel—chapelonians was their right name—these were fined if they threw type at one another; if they took away each other's press-balls; if they left the blanket on the press tympan; if they fought, swore, got drunk, gave the lie, left their candles burning at night, and so on; if they paid the fine, or "solace," imposed upon them for the offence, all went well; but if they did not pay, or otherwise attend, Ralph was invoked, and Ralph answered to the ominous invocation. He walked; and as his walk had curious stepping to it, it led him to hide the offender's composing-stick, to take away his galleys, to cut his page-cords, to misplace his "sorts," to order him to be "sent to Coventry," and, finally, to be smoked out by brimstone matches, when a lighted match was held, one by each man, who surrounded the offender's frame, keeping him in the midst, and singing mock dirges or (by the book) "a doleful ditty."

It will be clearly collected, by now, that printing of the jobbing division—including auctioneers' catalogues, billheads, pamphlets, cards, &c.—can be carried on by

children—under a well-qualified master—efficiently. This limitation will always have to exist, however. It is not meant to be advanced here that children can ever be rapid enough, in hand or mind, for the swift issue of newspapers, of which branch of the business there was, curiously, an old Conservative disdain, exemplified in one part of the legacy left a century since by William Bowyer, which was "To a Compositor of good life and conversation, who shall not have worked on a newspaper or magazine for four years before his nomination, nor shall ever afterwards;" Bowyer himself having been the well-known printer to the Lords and Commons, besides printer of the Parliament Rolls, and author to boot. Neither is it meant to be advanced that children can ever be responsible enough, in mind or hand, for books. There is the special difficulty to be met of imposing (effected on a large iron table; which is the altar as it were of the Caxtonian chapel) the moment that "matter" has to be printed on paper that must be folded. Imposing means the manner and the method in which pages in type are arranged to form a sheet, so that the pages shall read consecutively; it can be comprehended if a number of this journal be opened, and the "dodging" numbering of the pages be noted; and though this difficulty exists, of course, in any work that covers as few even as four pages, it is the multiplication of this difficulty that puts it beyond the small powers of a child. Reprints, possibly, could be mastered entirely by Early Workers. It is said by William Savage, the author previously quoted, that "in reprints a man has only to arrange letter for letter, point for point, and line for line, on which employment he may whistle, sing, talk, or laugh, without inconvenience;" and these lively recommendations would manifestly agree so excellently with little boys, that it brings the wish to set them to whistle and sing, and laugh and talk, immediately. But when we recollect the difficulty of setting up from bad manuscript, of the higher departments of a printer's duty, it is certain that at bookwork children's qualifications would be of no avail. Take spelling. Printers rule a great deal of this; by printers, in combination, let it be remembered, much of the uncertainty of spelling, i.e. as much as is needed of spelling reform, could be remedied very speedily, a proof of which is to be found in work so carefully executed as the Bible.

Four sets of Bible printers, viz. the Queen's, Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh, by a list published in the year 1841, had their editions varying in the points of one l or two l's in befel, reversing their practices over one l or two in befal; were at variance also in cuckoo and cuckow; in briars and briers; in fetcht and fetched; in freeman and free man and free-man—exhausting that point successfully, however much room there might be for more diversity elsewhere; by phonetic torture in houshold and household, in lothe and loathe, razor and razor, wagons and waggons, villainously and villanously, and very many words more; and where Authorised and University printers act upon opposite principles it would undoubtedly take much more than a young Early Worker to make these principles agree. Yet, as far as the mere printing is concerned—the act, that is, of impressing—those nimble little schoolboys who were seen to lay on to the machine, to take off, and to turn, might just as well have been operating on a sermon as a sensation novel, on a science disquisition in a stiff volume, as on a note-size handbill, announcing that poodle Nellie had strayed away, and ten shillings reward would be paid when she was brought home. It is all one. The young compositors bring the forme, complete and ready; it is secured on the machine; the young printers arrange it; give a turn; and all is done. They have no jurisdiction over capital or comma, over width of spacing or ornamental scroll. And let this distinction between them and compositors (early and adult) be kept a broad distinction, and not allowed to pass quite out of sight.

FOUNTAIN VIOLET.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

DURING our absence from the busier haunts of men, there had occurred in London an incident unexampled in its nature, and destined to exercise considerable influence on our future lot.

Mr. Lewcraft, who had never within the memory of any of his neighbours been known to leave Fountain Violet except to put to sea, suddenly appeared in the metropolis, and presented himself to the astonished gaze of his solicitor and agent, Mr. Tobias Earwaker, Copthall-court, City-rents.

Why did Mr. Earwaker turn so pale, and grip the arms of his office-chair as if

he had been confronted by a spectre? To say truth, his old client's appearance was not reassuring. White and worn, with a harassing cough, and a strange, wistful glitter in his restless eyes; clad in a long brown coat, threadbare, and hanging about his attenuated frame like that on a scarecrow, Mr. Lewcraft stood there, the very personification of the eager, wealthy, but dying miser, clinging to the last to his idol, gold, yet fearfully conscious that it must, within the briefest space, be to him less, or worse, than nothing.

Nor, when my uncle spoke, was the hoarse, sepulchral voice—theretofore not unpleasant, and full of the melody of money—out of keeping with his changed exterior.

Mr. Earwaker, recovering himself, rose hastily:

"My dear, good sir! this is indeed a pleasant surprise!"

"Perhaps, Earwaker, the pleasure may be diminished when I——" A cough interrupted the speaker, and he sank into a chair.

"Aha! how is that, my good friend?" asked the lawyer, in whose voice a slight tremor might be detected. "By-the-way, how well you are looking!"

"If what is called 'daylight,' in Copthall-court, gave you any title to judge of a man's looks, I should say you were a flatterer, Earwaker," croaked my uncle. "Tut, man! you may read death in my face. But to business. I am here, Earwaker, to tender you my very sincere acknowledgments for the ability and integrity with which you have managed my numerous investments, and to relieve you of all further duties respecting them."

"I was in hopes, sir, that your visit was rather with the intention of adding to them," said the lawyer. "Curiously enough, I had been just examining a list, newly prepared for your inspection, of—I really think—the very soundest and most promising——"

"No matter," interrupted Mr. Lewcraft. "My mind is fully made up. I am about to realise every shilling."

"You don't say so!" ejaculated the other, with a sort of gasp, as of one who has received a shower-bath. "But, sir, the prices——"

"I'll take my chance. Everything sold for the next account. You will merely hand over the scrip, etcetera."

"I should surely watch my opportunity, sir."

"Don't I tell you, my good friend, the thing is done?" asked my uncle, with some impatience. "Everything is sold for the next account; here is a duplicate list." And he produced a paper wherein every description of stock, shares, &c., in Earwaker's custody, belonging to Mr. Lewcraft, was noted down in very clerkly fashion indeed.

"Sold!" echoed the lawyer, faintly. "You have then already instructed Bilkham—?"

"Passing his office, I thought I might as well save you that trouble," said Mr. Lewcraft, indifferently.

"I shall, of course, observe your directions. But, excuse me, my good friend, have you reflected on the serious loss of income? So much money—let us, at a rough guess, call it sixty thousand—lying dead, sir, dead!" remonstrated the lawyer.

"What is dead is beyond misfortune, Earwaker," said my uncle, with a grin so peculiar and sinister that it almost appalled the other. "Banks break, stocks fall, schemes collapse, men rob. For whatever time is left me here, I will know no banker but myself."

"My dear sir, you astonish me."

"Prepare to be still more astonished," said my uncle, quietly. "Be good enough to remit to me the proceeds of these several sales, as far as practicable, in specie."

"In specie! Sixty thous—"

"If you will be the bearer yourself, Earwaker," said Mr. Lewcraft, with grim politeness, "you will be a welcome visitor—my first—to Fountain Violet."

"Mad, or a miser?" pondered the lawyer, bowing his thanks, with a troubled smile.

"One last surprise for you, Earwaker," resumed my uncle. "I have made my will."

"Not, I trust, without professional aid, my dear sir? Take heed. You know the proverb!"

"I could not consult you, for a reason," replied Mr. Lewcraft, apologetically.

"Providence has, you know, left me singularly bare of those not unmixed blessings, blood-relations. There remains but one, my nephew, Adolphus Sweetlove, between whom and myself little correspondence has been wasted, and no love lost at all. That young gentleman, possessing nothing himself, has lately married a young lady of equal fortune. He wrote, not seeking my approval, but coolly advising

me of his intended marriage. My acknowledgment was brief, almost epigrammatic," said my uncle, with a hoarse chuckle. "The parties married, and are, I conclude, subsisting on the hope that a relationless old uncle, in despair of better channels for his posthumous wealth, might bequeath a portion to them. It was natural. I could not bring myself wholly to disappoint these anticipations. Now this nephew of mine is a fine gentleman—is what is now recognised, I am informed, in courtly circles, as a swell. Well, sir, I have a yacht, a fine vessel, that has cost me," continued Mr. Lewcraft, with a wry face, "much, and is, from the secret of construction she carries about with her, more valuable than anything of her tonnage afloat. I left Adolphus my yacht, bequeathing all else that I possess to—to—"

My uncle paused, and slowly extended his hand. As the other took it, his heart seemed to stand still. There was no mistaking Mr. Lewcraft's tone.

"Yes," resumed the latter, pressing the lawyer's cold thin digits affectionately. "Yes, Earwaker, my friend of thirty years, to whose sound advice my financial prosperity is mainly due; who, better than yourself, would have earned this proof of friendship?"

"Would have!" thought Earwaker with a shiver.

"However, on reconsidering the matter, I judged it more expedient to apply a test. Dividing my possessions as I intended, I have reserved to Captain Sweetlove the option of taking either yacht or mansion, with the contents of either, as his taste may suggest. And I think I can guess what will be his decision! Ha! my time is up. Within a few days, then, Earwaker, I shall look for you, you human argosy, at Fountain Violet."

With these words, my uncle took his leave.

"I think I could hazard a guess as to that gentleman's errand!" was the frank remark of another client of Mr. Earwaker's, who had been biding his time in the ante-room. It was young Pogson, a medical man, who had just purchased a practice in the neighbourhood.

"The dence you could! And what?"

"To execute his last will and testament!" said Mr. Pogson, poking his friend and legal adviser playfully in the ribs. "That man has not three months to live."

Mr. Earwaker looked at him, but made no reply.

Pogson's business was despatched as quickly as civility permitted, and, dismissing his easy-mannered friend, the lawyer sank back in his chair, and strove to realise the position in which he found himself placed. It was, as will be seen, a strange and critical one.

Earwaker was the son and successor of a solicitor of good repute, who bequeathed to him a considerable practice, relating chiefly to matters connected with commerce and finance. The younger man, while inheriting most of his father's business qualities, possessed one failing which the latter had not—ambition. Debarred by circumstances from a higher career, he saw his road to social distinction only through the acquisition of wealth—commanding wealth. To this object he had devoted his life, his moneyed connection furnishing many an opportunity for those daring operations which, if successful, lay the foundation of a mighty fortune, if they do not achieve it at a stroke. More than once, he had held the prize he aimed at almost in his grasp. But reverse almost always followed victory. Nay, a series of mishaps would sometimes reduce his accumulated gains almost to where they began. Wearied at length with fortune's caprices, Earwaker—losing his habitual coolness and caution—connected himself with a scheme which, successful at first, began to falter and lose ground under the pressure of difficulties, against which no human foresight could have provided. Money—a little more money—and all would be well. Nay, the result was certain—so, at least, said all concerned. The little money was supplied, became more, very much more, and by this time it had grown to be a question of sink or swim. More than one faint heart sought to adopt a middle course, and, abandoning the ship, greatly augmented her peril. Still, the position was not desperate, provided only that assistance was immediate and effectual. All eyes turned towards the man who had been the chief promoter of the undertaking—the shrewd financier, Earwaker. That gentleman's resources, though far from equal to the claim now made upon them, represented no inconsiderable amount, but these could not be realised on the instant, and the necessity would not brook an hour's delay. In a fatal moment, the hitherto honest man fell into temptation. The much-needed money was obtained,

but it was at the cost of Mr. Earwaker's conscience, and on the security of every fraction of Mr. Lewcraft's property—between fifty and sixty thousand pounds—then in his agent's custody. No wonder if, at my uncle's apparition, Mr. Earwaker looked a little disturbed!

And now what was to be done? Through what would have been a very dismal cloud indeed, the lawyer thought he saw a gleam of light. According to his client's statement, the latter had, by his will, virtually given his nephew the choice of fortune or yacht! Now, probably, no man on earth—save Earwaker himself—knew of what that fortune consisted. Certainly, his nephew did not. What if, realising his uncle's expectation, perhaps his wish—the young man preferred the handsome, well-appointed yacht, to the dreary, impoverished-looking edifice on the bleak hill, and such poor property as was likely to be found there? But hold. Conscience! Was he not bound to apprise the young man of the wealth within his very grasp? In that case—ruin. Suppression was not falsehood, not always treachery. At all events, call it in this case both, what was it in comparison with the crime of which he had already been guilty? No—there was no escape. With a deep-drawn sigh—farewell tribute to integrity—Mr. Earwaker accepted what seemed his doom.

I must condense details. The first essential object was the redemption of the deposited securities. With a heavy heart, and at a tremendous sacrifice, Earwaker converted into money the whole of his own remaining property, realising some thirty thousand pounds. With the aid of a city friend, and a further heavy sacrifice, he contrived to raise the remainder, twenty-five thousand, thus placing himself in a position to release the securities, and to complete, in due course, the bargains entered into by his principal.

"All this risk, loss, and anxiety, to gratify a miser's whim!" muttered Mr. Earwaker ungratefully, and returning worn out from his broker's, he sank wearily into his chair.

A little surprise awaited my uncle on his return to Fountain Violet. Upon his table lay a letter from the secretary of the local yacht club, in which that gentleman, after apprising Mr. Lewcraft of the approaching regatta, expressed the hope of the committee that he, Mr. Lewcraft, would compete for a prize cup of one hundred pounds, limited, it was politely added, to

vessels of from forty to forty-five tons, chiefly with the view of inducing Mr. Lewcraft to enter his fine cutter Cockatoo for the race.

"We must spot his new dodge," the chairman of the committee had observed frankly. "Let's entice the beggar out. Offer a jug of sovs. That'll fetch him, if anything will."

Ill and fatigued as he was, my uncle—so his servants reported—appeared for the moment to regain health and strength, as he read this civil letter. His eyes sparkled with delight, and though, at one passage he grinned sardonically, it was evident that the writer's object was achieved.

"Send Bob Grantham," said my uncle, regaining his composure.

That veteran appeared. Hirsute alike in aspect and attire, Mr. Grantham looked like a tame bear walking on its hind legs, the resemblance being favoured by his speech, which was, to speak more strictly, growl. Few but his familiars could readily interpret Bob Grantham.

"How goes your work, Bob?" asked my uncle eagerly.

Bob sounded a bass note, signifying "Finished."

"Ready for——?"

This time, a long, low rumble, like a train in a tunnel, intimated that it only awaited the gov'nor's final instructions.

"Good. I enter for the cutter-race a month hence," said my uncle. "We'll take the shine out of some of them, ha, Bob?"

Mr. Grantham was seized with a chuckle that shook his shaggy frame from head to foot. As this, with Bob, was somewhat unusual, Mr. Lewcraft waited with some curiosity for the next growl. When it came, the mysterious substance can only be interpreted as:

"Wot odds, gov'nor—so long's they leaves the shine in we?"

This joke—for joke it evidently was—Mr. Lewcraft received with an approving smile, and forthwith, looking, now that his momentary excitement was over, very wan and weary, retired to rest.

My uncle had returned, even after that brief absence, much changed and enfeebled. It was perhaps for that reason that, during the succeeding week or ten days, he scarcely visited his beloved Cockatoo, contenting himself with giving Bob Grantham special orders as to the selection of the half-a-dozen hands who

were to form her crew under Bob in the coming race.

The next incident I have to record was the arrival at Fountain Violet of Mr. Earwaker's confidential clerk, in charge of sundry chests, of no great size, but of unusual strength and weight, of which, it was noted, he declined to lose sight; he was the bearer of apologies from his principal, who was at the moment too unwell to travel, and also of twenty-five thousand pounds in specie, besides several thousands more in notes.

"Hang it!" Mr. Earwaker had muttered, out of patience, "he must take the balance in paper. It's all the easier to hide, and, if he intends to use old sofa-cushions and invalided crockery as his future depositories, far more eligible."

After the arrival and dismissal of the auriferous messenger, Mr. Lewcraft was observed to rally somewhat, notwithstanding that his nights seemed disturbed. Old Louisa, the cook ("Squeezer") and Maypole Moll could often hear the old man prowling stealthily about the house at untimely hours, apparently with some object beside exercise, for he was heard opening cupboards, sounding panels, fumbling about the stoves, &c., sometimes not returning to rest till dawn. He now crept down to his yacht every day, and was engaged with Bob Grantham, and another old selected seadog, very like Bob, but shaggier, in perfecting the invention that was to make the Cockatoo renowned for aye. Both the seadogs now dwelt on board, and so determined was Mr. Lewcraft that no one should surprise his secret, that the men kept alternate watches, and were armed.

During this time, my uncle made several excursions into the town, usually visiting the local bank, and always using a carriage, having now grown too weak to return on foot up the hill. So deathlike was his look, that Louisa alarmed, took counsel with Mr. Grantham and Maypole Moll, and with the concurrence of those advisers, expressed her fears, by letter to Mr. Earwaker and myself, that her master would shortly be found dead in his chair or bed. It now wanted but three days to the regatta.

The important day opened brightly, with all the stir and flutter belonging to such occasions. Some minor matches came off with effect, but the great interest centred in the cutter-match, fixed to start at noon.

Long before that hour, six of the seven competitors were at their moorings, the seventh buoy remaining so long unoccupied, that doubts began to arise whether, after all, the Cockatoo would put in an appearance. However, at half-past eleven, that vessel was seen to issue majestically from her cove, and take up her position. All acknowledged her to be a magnificent specimen of her class, sitting like a queen upon the water, and looking every inch a winner.

As the committee's boat, according to custom, pulled alongside, Mr. Lewcraft, who, though now very ill, had insisted on accompanying the race, was seen reclining on a pallet, on deck. Conditions of the match having been formally explained, my uncle's visitors paid him a deserved compliment on the fine appearance of his yacht, receiving in return a gracious and wholly unexpected invitation to come on board and inspect her. Eagerly accepting it, the gentlemen dived below, and quickly returned, with faces of genuine astonishment.

"My dear Mr. Lewcraft," said one, "you are, of course, the best judge of your vessel's trim, but, permit us to ask, are you not something short of ballast? Your space and head room are marvellous. It is to be hoped that you have not sacrificed stability to convenience. Unless I am mistaken," the speaker added, glancing to windward, "there will be weather enough to try the stiffest of you!"

"Gentlemen, you will see," was Mr. Lewcraft's only response, as he bowed them farewell.

The sea, meanwhile, had been increasing, and the wind freshened so rapidly as to amount, before the starting-gun was fired, to half a gale. Such was the threatening aspect of things, that all the yachts, except the Cockatoo and her next neighbour, the Dione, struck their topsails before the start.

Bang! Open flew white acres of canvas, and away bowled the yachts, the Cockatoo last, and taking it so easy that, but for the death's-head and cross-bones—my uncle's lively racing colours—still flying aloft, she might be thought only a spectator. Her crew, all of the Bob Grantham type, could be seen lounging rather than bustling about the deck; nevertheless, she was seamanly handled, appeared, despite her large topsail, as stiff as a house, and, long before the storm-mist shut the race from view, had left her nearest competitor full half-a-mile astern.

At two o'clock on that day, Mr. Earwaker, looking very pale and anxious, made his appearance at Fountain Violet, to learn with great surprise (I would not give it a worse name), that his supposed dying friend was sailing a stormy match on the high seas!

Had Captain Sweetlove arrived? On being assured that he had not, Mr. Earwaker composed himself, and took some luncheon. An interesting colloquy then ensued between himself and Squeezer, in which the latter detailed with great minuteness her master's recent condition and doings, his failing intellect, his nocturnal wanderings, his snatches of feverish rest during the day, in which exclamations might be heard to escape him, &c., all pointing to one and the same predominant idea. "Gold! gold!" he would mutter. "More gold! All gold, I tell you. All gold!"

"Have you, my good friend," asked Mr. Earwaker, "any reason to suppose that your poor master, whom you watch and serve with such kindness and fidelity, has been in the habit of—of concealing what money he has by him about the house, now?"

"Such, sir," replied Squeezer, "are my convictions, likeways Mayp—that is, Moll's. There ain't a hole or corner in the house not stuffed with bank-notes, gold, and silver, and what not. Bless'ee, we've heard it chinking most nights in the week!"

"It is as I thought," mused the lawyer. "The miser's fancy full upon him! Oh, might the sea but swallow him, and that before his nephew comes! With him come explanation, reconciliation, my disgrace and ruin. Ha! how the wind shakes this old place!" he went on involuntarily, as a tremendous gust howled by. "Don't ships go down in weather like this?"

Squeezer shivered, and owned that it was possible.

"I—I think I'll stroll to the cliff. The yachts, they tell me, should be returning," said Earwaker, and he went out.

Despite the weather, groups were assembled on the cliffs, eagerly watching. Few sails were visible, most of those not engaged in the race having run for shelter from the increasing gale; but in the far distance a snow-white speck, in strong relief against the black horizon, seemed to be attracting every eye.

"'Tis she, sure enough," said a coast-

guard man, examining her through his powerful glass. "Topsel's gone or struck, but—Blazes! how she travels! If she don't round that 'ere flag-boat in half-an-hour, my name's not Bill Jerdine, nor her'n Cockatoo."

Bill was a true prophet. On swept the gallant yacht in solitary grandeur. Of the rest, the Dione alone remained in the race, a mile or more astern, and with a terrific heel, while the Cockatoo sailed like a moving rock.

The report of the winning-gun was inaudible in the storm, but the flash and smoke announced the latter's victory. As she rounded the flag-boat, however, a strange thing occurred. Her distinguishing flag—the death's-head and cross-bones—which, by custom, should have been flown till sunset, was seen to sink half-mast high!

Being now in smooth water, she was quickly surrounded by boats, the excitement on shore increasing in proportion. Very soon the news was told. Bob Grantham, with sobs that shook his shaggy frame, announced that his master lay dead on the wave-washed deck.

"He had seemed werry weak," Bob explained, "but didn't complain nuffin." Half-an-hour since, however, he had beckoned Bob, and, with a very laboured utterance, bade him thank the hands for the skill and attention to duty to which he owed his victory, his last words—according to posthumous testimony—being these: "Coom wot may, Bob, you take her in a winner. Give us your hand, old friend, and now don't ye look at the guv'nor agin till you hears the winnin'-gun." "And, by jingo," added Bob, fairly bursting into tears, "when we run to him he was gone."

Not having been apprised of old Louisa's fears so quickly as Mr. Earwaker, I only reached Fountain Violet late that day. The solicitor met me on the threshold, feelingly communicated the news, and conducted me to the chamber of the dead. I had not seen my poor uncle for twenty years, and was prepared for a great change. But, no; in the calm of death those twenty years had vanished. With his closed lips and eyes the old man looked as young—I had almost said, as comely—as my dear mother's dead face had been described to me.

In the evening, after a melancholy meal in the hushed house, Mr. Earwaker suddenly addressed me:

"I fear, my dear sir, that important business will demand my presence in London to-morrow, or at latest the following day. It would, perhaps, facilitate matters were we at once to ascertain what steps should be taken in regard to your poor uncle's affairs. There is reason to suppose they will not cause us much trouble," concluded Mr. Earwaker, with a significant smile.

"Of that, you are a better judge than I," I replied innocently. "I should fancy, however, that my poor uncle expended his means chiefly on his yacht."

"Quite so. At any rate, the keeping of this old mansion must have cost him little. The land is worth something, though the site is somewhat bleak for building purposes. It cannot be worth much. We can, with your approval, proceed at once to business. Your uncle's will lies, I am told, in that cabinet, of which Louisa has found the key. Shall we examine?"

I assented, and Mr. Earwaker, with professional promptitude, selected and opened the document.

In a few lines it declared the dispositions already made known, i.e. the yacht and contents on the one part, the mansion and contents on the other; myself to have the choice.

Mr. Earwaker folded up the paper, and looked at me enquiringly.

"I know little of the value of land hereabouts, sir," I said, after a pause; "still less of the worth of a yacht; but—but this vessel, the only object in which my poor uncle took a cordial interest, seems, somehow, to commend itself to my choice."

Mr. Earwaker grasped my hand.

"The notion, my young friend, does you honour," he exclaimed warmly. "We can, then, if you think fit, join in a rough record of this little arrangement; and so clear the way for details, which I can carry out in London."

This was done. And now an impulse, as irresistible as it was unaccountable, suddenly seized me, and would not relax its hold. It urged me to go at once on board the vessel—now virtually my own—there to pass the night. Mr. Earwaker, perhaps once more approving of the sentiment that seemed to suggest this idea, made but a faint resistance. Nay, he offered himself to accompany me to the little cove and present me to the custodians of the yacht as their new master.

Although the wind was still raging, the

night was bright and clear. We were received on board by Bob Grantham and his mate, both of whom, a little to my surprise, wore pistols and carried life-preservers of formidable size; and, matters being explained, Mr. Earwaker took his leave. Wearied and conscious of a curious depression, I soon retired to rest.

Next morning I was aroused early. A letter from Mr. Earwaker.

"My dear sir," he wrote, "it has just occurred to my mind that a friend and client of my own is seeking a yacht just the size of the Cockatoo. Like yourself, I am ignorant of the market value of such vessels; but, remembering that my client is rich, and accustomed to indulge his fancies, I have fixed on a price which must, I think, meet your most sanguine estimate of her value—three thousand pounds. Will you accept it? Yours, &c.,

"T. EARWAKER."

Much perplexed, I made a confidant of Bob Grantham.

"Don't you ha' nuffin to say to'n, guv'nor," was Bob's counsel, given with decision.

I wrote a few words, declining the offer. In half an hour I received a second note.

"On my own responsibility I increase my friend's offer to five thousand pounds. T. E."

Mr. Grantham, on being shown this, fell into such convulsions of laughter that he looked like a tipsy bear.

"You say, 'Won't do, guv'nor.'"

A little later, arrived a third note.

"Have telegraphed. Answer, 'Carte blanche.' Will you take ten thousand, or what? T. E."

"I'll tell 'ee what, guv'nor," growled Bob. "Come along o' me."

We descended to the hold, Bob's comrade following. Then the two powerful fellows laboured about the ballast till they had laid all bare to the very bottom. Within the false keel—of immense strength—lay rows upon rows of golden coin, sovereigns, amounting in number to nearly eighty thousand, and in weight little under two tons.

This was my uncle's ballast secret. I have space for but a word more.

Grace and I agreed to purchase Fountain Violet, sold at a reasonable price for the benefit of the bankrupt estate of a gentleman lately resident in Copthall-court, City-rents.

We are happy, prosperous; I trust,

deeply grateful also to the Source of all good gifts. At all events, when I look on the best of those He has bestowed on me, I feel inclined to bow my head, and—say Grace.

AMERICAN MARVELS.

"JOHN BULL," says Lowell, "has suffered the idea of the Invisible to be very much fattened out of him. Jonathan is conscious still that he lives in the World of the Unseen as well as of the Seen." A confession, we take it, that, hard-headed and practical-minded as he boasts himself to be, Brother Jonathan has more than a spice of superstition in his composition. The consciousness of living in the World of the Unseen lately influenced a New York journalist to assert that the destruction of the Brooklyn Theatre was not, as the jury found, due to carelessness and the lack of common precautions, but to its founders forgetting the well-established fact, that places of entertainment erected on consecrated ground are foredoomed to come to a grievous end. Desirous that the drama should be as well housed in Brooklyn as in the Empire city, certain citizens thereof purchased St. John's Church and burying-ground, pulled down the sacred edifice, built a handsome theatre on the site, and offered the lease to Mr. and Mrs. Conway, whose good management had made the Park Theatre popular with playgoers. Mrs. Conway, "being a woman of sound, practical common sense," was convinced the desecration would be punished by disaster; but her scruples were overcome, and the new theatre started with every prospect of a prosperous career. It had not, however, been open long, ere strange things were whispered about it. Awful exhalations were said to pervade the actors' dressing-rooms, rendering them very disagreeable tiring-chambers; mysterious sounds were heard within its walls; and passers-by during the small hours told of weird shapes flitting through the doorways. Every door and window might be closely shut, but as soon as the lights were turned out of a night, the scenery flapped and cracked as though a fierce gale swept the deserted stage. While performing one evening, Mr. Conway, "a man with every indication of stalwart health and longevity," was seized with a fit, and, two weeks later, died. After struggling with misfortune for two years, his widow followed him to

the grave; raps on the walls and sighs in the air marking the hour of her dissolution. Her daughter "ran" the theatre unsuccessfully for a short time, and then the ill-starred house passed into other hands. The new stage-manager took up his abode in it, undaunted by the assurance that he would be plagued by a wandering spirit in the shape of a woman, and there he lived until burned out, without seeing any spirits, of that sort at least, in his rooms. Our newspaper philosopher, for all that, comes to the conclusion that the ill-fortune attending the Brooklyn Theatre from its opening, the unexplained noises within its walls while they were standing, and the terrible mortality attending its destruction, emphatically warn speculators of the inevitable fate awaiting theatres erected upon hallowed ground.

The ghosts walking the Brooklyn boards did their spiring unobtrusively, and apparently with no evil intent. New Orleans owned, perhaps yet owns, a ghost whose only pleasure in death was to tempt mortals to do what Cato did, and Addison approved. When clothed in flesh, this amiable spirit was known as Ann Murphy, a little old woman, often "run in" by the police, until, tired of the exercise, she hung herself in the Fourth-precinct police-station. Since she took that "dismal road to fame," a baker's dozen of involuntary tenants of the cell in which she did the deed have followed her lead. A young girl, who was cut down just in time, upon recovering consciousness declared that while lying on the floor she was aroused by a little old woman, in a faded calico dress, bound with brown crape, "brown jeans and a josey," no stockings, and down-trodden slippers—a perfect description of the defunct Mrs. Murphy of course. The old woman made her get up, tear her dress in strips, place one end of a strip round her neck, tie the other to the window-bars, and lift her feet from the floor. After that all was a blank until she opened her eyes and saw the doctor bending over her, when she comprehended what she had done. Other lodgers in the cell, who were not suicidally disposed, complained of being bothered by an old woman, so the authorities resolved to test the matter. A tramp strange to the city was soon caught and lodged in the haunted cell. Being tired and worn out he fell asleep immediately, but in a very little time he rushed into the office uncommonly wide awake, vowing he would

not stop another minute in the place; for he, too, had received a visit from Mrs. Murphy, and had no desire to improve the acquaintanceship.

One morning in 1862, The New York Times treated readers of its Shipping News with this singular item: "Newport, 22nd Oct. The *Usk*, bound for Coquimbo, has put back. She had been out five months, and fetched latitude fifty-five degrees three minutes. The vessel is all right, but the master persuaded the crew to return here in consequence of having seen a vision." The freak cost the skipper his certificate. He might with reason deem himself an ill-used man, if he lived to hear how another merchant captain won praise and reward by trusting, as he had done, "the mockery of unquiet slumbers." On the 24th of November, 1875, the brigantine *Fred-Eugene*, of Portland, U.S., left Bordeaux for Key West. On the night of the 29th, her captain dreamed he saw a number of men in peril, from which it was in his power to rescue them. He got up, ordered a sharp lookout to be kept, and turned in again, to dream the same dream. This sent him on deck once more, but he could see nothing for the darkness of the night; nevertheless, he put the vessel a couple of points nearer the wind, and waited for daylight. As soon as it dawned, Captain Smalley went aloft, and some distance to windward descried a ship flying a signal of distress. Although the wind was blowing hard, he clapped on more sail and beat to windward; but finding he only gained on one tack to lose on the next, he made a long stretch, hoping the stranger might drift towards him. After the lapse of a considerable time, three boats were seen pulling for the brigantine, and Captain Smalley had the pleasure of welcoming on board twenty-five men belonging to the *Sparckenhoe* of Dublin, which they had abandoned in a sinking condition. Immediately afterwards a terrific gale set in. It lasted four days, but the good ship weathered the storm, and upon its abating, shaped her course for Gibraltar, and landed the strangely-saved seamen. Through heeding his dream, Captain Smalley lost twenty-seven days, but he won for himself a gold chronometer and the thanks of the British Government.

The son of a butcher in Franklin, Massachusetts, dreamed that his father had been suffocated in the ice-safe. On awaking, he made his way down-

stairs with all speed. The old man was not there, and no one had seen anything of him. Going to the ice-safe, he discovered his father all but dead within. He had been making the round of the premises early in the morning and gone inside the safe, when the door swinging to, shut fast with its spring-lock, and he was only saved from death by his son's dream bringing about its own non-fulfilment. When Adam Wagner, of 180, Second-street, New York, beheld in his sleep a huge black board, bearing the figures 10—11—75, that ardent devotee of "policy"—whatever that may be—thought himself a lucky fellow, and lost no time in finding a policy-shop, and putting his pile, just one-and-three-quarter dollars, upon those numbers. Sure enough they proved the winning ones, and Adam congratulated himself upon being the richer by two hundred and sixty dollars; but, alas for human expectations! upon calling for the money, the rascally Pfeiffer would not pay up, as we are told "is almost always the way in such cases;" and although the exasperated gambler had the satisfaction of seeing the policy-shop keeper committed for trial, that did not console him for the loss of his stake, and having wasted such a very "straight tip."

If a man's ancestors have neglected to provide him with a ghost, a banshee, or some such honourable appendage, it is something to have a curse in the family. Sixty years ago a beautiful dark-eyed maiden lost her sight when just out of her teens, and was forced to beg for subsistence. Calling one day at a house in Dorchester County, Massachusetts, two of the boys volunteered to lead her to a place where she would be liberally treated; but, taking her into a swamp, they left her there to perish of hunger and cold, but not before she had prayed Heaven to punish her betrayal by rendering the descendants of her treacherous guides as helpless as she was; and ever since, every male born into that family has become blind between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, "as hundreds of persons in Dorchester County will verify." Dorchester boys wisely give blind beggars a wide berth. May the fate of the amiable and gifted Miss Boomershine, of Phillips County, who died in 1874, under very peculiar circumstances, be as well remembered by girls inclined to unnatural appetites. The lady in question had contracted the bad habit of eating clay from

the roadside. In this particular summer the grasshoppers came out in great force, and deposited their eggs everywhere. Miss Boomershine all at once gave up clay-eating, and took to nibbling blades of corn, leaves of trees, dog-fennel, and other weeds, and declared she felt as if she could take wing and fly away. Growing alarmed at this new eccentricity, her friends called in Dr. Leduc, who pronounced his patient to be labouring under an hallucination. She continued in the same state until the grasshoppers showed signs of seeking fresh fields, when she took to watch them from the window, while her relatives were as anxiously watching her. One day, she rushed out of the house, flapped her arms as though they were wings, rose about ten feet in the air, and fell to the ground, dead! A post-mortem examination revealed that "within, she was literally swarming with grasshoppers."

Lovers are not apt at looking far ahead, or Timothy Bradlee, of Trumbull County, Ohio, would have thought twice ere he wooed the fair triplet, Eunice Mowery, daughter of a pair of twins, and granddaughter of a matron who filled her husband's quiver by five successive double contributions. Timothy, however, was too anxious to become the proprietor of two hundred and seventy-three pounds' weight of beauty to calculate possibilities, and paid the penalty of his rashness; finding himself twice hailed as a father of twins, by way of preliminary to being presented, in the sixth year of his married life, with five girls and three boys. Whatever Mr. Bradlee may have thought of this compound multiplication of olive branches, Mrs. Bradlee accepted the situation with more serenity than was displayed by Rebecca Duhling at the coming of a single boy; but he was "such a boy as never was," a posthumous pledge of affection, that caused his parent to weep because her babe was not like unto other babes. When six weeks old he was more like an ape than a human being; his head was unnaturally large, his eyes unnaturally bright, and his teeth as well developed as those of a man. Mrs. Duhling was a Jewish washerwoman, and lived in an old tenement-house in Ridge-street, New York. Returning home one evening from her work, she was startled by her little daughter complaining that her charge had been sitting up and talking, and, going to the cradle, was saluted by its precocious occupant with,

"Mother, why did you go away and leave me so long?" Not knowing what else to do she sent for the rabbi, who listened incredulously to her story, until the subject of it rebuked his unbelief by crying out, "I could tell you a great deal that you don't know. Ask me much and I will tell you much. Ask me little and I will tell you little. I know more about this world and the next than you know, or ever can learn!" This was too much for the rabbi's endurance. He had taken care to bring with him the emblems of priesthood—two small black leather cases, an inch and a half square, containing pieces of parchment inscribed with certain verses from Deuteronomy. One of these he fastened on the child's forehead, the other on his left arm; then, touching each in turn with the forefinger of the right hand, the rabbi laid his finger on the boy's forehead. The infant immediately laid himself down and died—out of chagrin at the priest's performing the rite for casting out devils; at least, that was the way the wife of "a religious and intelligent Hebrew cigar-dealer" accounted for its sudden demise. When an enquiring journalist interviewed Rabbi Hirsch, that gentleman expressed great regret for the "wonder-child's" death, but declared its utterances were quite unintelligible to him, although apparently understood by Mrs. Duhling, whose truthfulness he had no reason to doubt. The child certainly spoke, but how it came to possess the power to do so he could not tell, unless its brain had been unnaturally developed by the administration of hydrate of chloral, which had been given to it by the doctor's direction. Andrew Jackson Davis, "the head and front of the spiritualists in the United States," had no difficulty in solving the mystery. By the indescribable and subtle means of spiritual magnetism, the spirits of the departed get possession of the mortal bodies of persons now on earth, and hold possession of them as long as they think fit; and a babe could easily be thus endowed with mediumistic powers, and its innocent prattle charged with intelligent words and sentences. Hoping to elicit a little more information about this interesting marvel of precocity, our friend the reporter paid a second visit to Ridge-street, only to learn that Mrs. Duhling had quietly departed, without leaving word where she might be found; but he had the gratification of being informed by a gentleman on the

second floor, that the widow had run away to avoid being pestered by newspaper men and other inquisitive people.

If we may believe The New York Ledger, a wild cat and her six kittens lately besieged a house in Michigan, and kept the family prisoners for several hours. No wonder, then, that the folks of the Shelton Laurel district of North Carolina fortified their domiciles against such a formidable foe as the "mountain monster," of which Mr. George Anderson gave the following account in The Jonesboro' Advertiser: "I was out in the jungle hunting up some lost hogs, when all of a sudden there came into my path a beast, the appearance of which, I must confess, caused me to quake for the first time for many years. And, apart from its strange and unearthly appearance, the yell it uttered on perceiving me, which reverberated and reverberated through the forest, was enough to shake the senses of the most daring adventurer. The animal was some hundred yards distant from me, and appeared to be a huge black bear, with mane and head like a lion, but had horns like an elk upon it. Its tail was long and bushy, with dark and light rings around it to its very extremity. Its eyes gleamed like a panther's, and its size was that of an ordinary ox, but somewhat longer. I set about reloading my rifle, but had scarcely begun when it started towards me. I retreated in as good order as possible, and must say I did some good running, not looking back until I had reached an open spot, when I found the animal had disappeared in the laurel thickets." It is very provoking that strange creatures, such as this mountain monster and the sea serpent, never show themselves to any one able and willing to try conclusions with them, and by putting them out of existence prove their existence beyond a doubt.

The North Carolinian nondescript was suspected of having as great a liking for mutton in the wool as the wolves of Illinois, cunning brutes, that "smell a rat" as quickly as they nose a sheep. A farmer one day discovered seven wolf pups ensconced in a hollow log. He dug a hole at the open end of the log, placed a trap in it, and covered it with earth. Determined the wolf should not escape by gnawing off her own foot or leg when caught, he kept watch with a companion and some dogs. Some time during the night the sire of the interesting family

housed in the log came near enough to the watchers to tempt the dogs giving fruitless chase, but he never approached the hidden trap. Upon examining the log in the morning, the trap was found unsprung, but the cubs had vanished. While Monsieur Wolf was amusing the dogs and their masters, Madame had made a hole through the side of the log and carried off her little ones to another hiding-place a mile away, where they were found snugly lodged under a heap of leaves. If the Illinois wolves know something of the principles of strategy, the bears of New Hampshire are just as remarkable for their appreciation of the advantages of unity of action and division of labour; for when bent upon orchard robbing, one bear, we are assured, climbs the tree and shakes down the fruit, while the others gather up the plunder! If the mute creation, as Erskine insisted they should be called, go on advancing in intelligence at this rate, we shall soon have to unlearn all that the classics of Natural History have taught us of their habits and characteristics, and relegate many a long-cherished belief to the limbo of exploded errors. The prospect is not a pleasing one, but it is some comfort to know that one creature at least is not disposed to alter its ways.

"There's a popular delusion about ostriches that I'd like you to straighten out," said a sub-keeper of the Central Park Menagerie to a gentleman on the staff of *The New York Sun*—at least, so that gentleman avers. "Most people think that the ostrich can eat anything. Goodness! there's as much difference in ostriches' appetites as in men's. Now, there's a bird there that eats nothing but railroad spikes; eats a keg a month, about three pounds and a half a day. Not much, to be sure, but spikes is very staying food; not expensive, but yet at the same time very filling. That ostrich next to him I'd like to bust with this club! He's the most particular bird on the premises; won't eat anything but horse-nails. I've tried time and again to get him off on cut-nails—good deal cheaper, you know—but it's no use. That tall bird walking this way lives on assorted hardware—brackets, door-knobs, jack-knives, padlocks, and the like. And so they go. Just as whimsical in their appetites as any human. Yes, they are sick sometimes. That spike bird got so last summer he couldn't raise his

wings, lost his appetite completely, and one spell we thought he'd walk off and never come back. But we doctored him up, and gave him light, nutritious food—shingle-nail porridge and carpet-tack gruel, and now and then some little delicacy like scrap-iron soup, and he came round all right; and then we tapered him up on brads and assorted nails, and finally got him on to spikes again, and now he's the ruggedest bird in the Park. I suppose that ostrich could eat more spikes in a day than a tracklayer could drive. Oh, no! don't you let anybody stuff you with the idea that an ostrich can eat anything. He's a hardy bird, but mighty particular about his diet."

DOUBLEDAY'S CHILDREN.

BY DUTTON COOK,

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE," "HOBSON'S CHOICE," &c. &c.

BOOK V. THE FURTHER NARRATIVE OF BASIL DOUBLEDAY.

CHAPTER V. NO NEWS IS BAD NEWS.

THE days went by, but they brought no news of Paul Riel.

"He promised to write," Doris repeated over and over again. "It was almost the last word he said to me. Why has he not written? Something serious must have happened to prevent his writing. Basil, what do you think has happened?"

What could I say?

It distressed me to see the expression of blank despair that seemed settling upon her face. At first she was animated by expectation; there was something to hope for—her first letter from her husband. Eagerly she looked for the postman; watched him pass from house to house; listened for his rapid footsteps and his brisk knock. But as he went on his way, bringing her no tidings of her Paul, her face wore a wining look, painful shadows clouded her brow, her pallid lips twitched, and the tears trembled in her eyes. "Still no letter," she repeated. "Yet he promised faithfully to write. Something serious has happened. Basil, what has become of Paul?" And then she sat waiting, waiting, until the postman came round again. There was a flickering of hope as he neared the house, and for awhile the light shone in her eyes once more, only to die out again, as to-day proved to be as yesterday, and no news of Paul came to her.

It was in vain I tried to comfort her. "No news is good news," I said.

"No news is bad news," she answered quickly, with a piteous smile and a weary sigh.

Her state seriously alarmed me. Her strength seemed to be declining, her health giving way rapidly. It was necessary to seek medical assistance.

The doctor prescribed the conventional remedies of rest and quiet, and change of scene, if that was possible. He told us what we already knew, that the patient was suffering from over-anxiety, from excess of mental distress. Some soothing and strengthening medicines he administered; but, as he said, he could not reach the origin of the malady to remove it. In truth he could not minister to a mind diseased.

At my solicitation, or rather at the first hint from me that she could be of the slightest service to Doris, Catalina visited the sufferer, was indeed unremitting in kind and sympathetic attendance upon her.

Mr. Grisdale was urgent that Doris should be brought to his house in Somers-town, so that she might be constantly under the care of Catalina, and further that she might be relieved of the expense of her lodging in the New-road. Her resources were already greatly reduced, and it did not seem well that she should be living alone and apart from us, unprotected, in her weakened and sorrowful state, so young and fair as she was too.

"It's a rough place," he said, "and it's what is called a poor neighbourhood, and we're plain people, but she'll be heartily welcome. I shall count it an honour her coming among us; and our little Lina will do all she can to help and comfort the poor ailing one; and there could not be a gentler nurse, with a lighter or tenderer hand, whether to bind up wounds or to pour in oil and wine; and her pretty smile and her sweet voice will be like cheery sun-rays falling upon a bed of suffering. Let the poor little wife come to us in Somers-town. After all, you know, she found a home there once, as you all did, not so very long ago. Why it seems only yesterday that you were three children playing together in the back-yard of poor Mr. Doubleday's house, next door to mine—climbing up the water-butt and looking over the wall—and Lina, here, was a mere mite of a thing, dancing about with her skipping-rope, or talking to her canary bird. Well, well,

times are changed; but Somers-town is much what it has always been. It isn't very clean to look at, for we're sparing there of the luxuries of new paint and whitewash; and its back-yards must be pronounced squalid and scrubby, without doubt; and there's a good many poor there, and a good many struggling and striving, and hard put to it to make the two ends meet. Generally we're a hard-working lot there, but reasonably honest, and very hearty and downright altogether. But make the best of us, and take us as we are, and I don't know that there's so very much to be said against us. You know all about us, Basil; indeed, we count you one of us. Your poor sister doesn't know us so well, for she was often away, at Bath, wasn't it? though she came back when your poor father was taken from us; and I remember her perfectly, the pretty, bright, gaily-dressed little creature, with her curls in a cluster on her neck. Beg her to trust herself again amongst us. I really think it's the best thing she can do."

She had been very reluctant, at first, to quit her lodgings, lest she should miss or be late in receiving news of Paul. But hope seemed to be dying within her, or at least all active expectation had gone from her. Something of the lassitude of ill-health affected her; a dreamy haze dimmed her eyes; despair numbed her sensibilities. Acute suffering had brought in its train the nepenthe of exhaustion.

Upon my promise to call night and morning at the New-road lodgings to bring to her any letters that might come to her address there from Paul, she consented to her removal to Mr. Grisdale's abode in Ossulton-street.

There was almost an air of triumph about her reception there; Lina was so occupied with kindness. Mr. Grisdale was bustling to and fro, all excitement and gesticulation, while Uncle Junius looked on with clasped, tremulous hands, a fond, admiring smile hovering about his mouth, while sad tears were trickling down his cheeks. "The poor soul! How changed she is—how wan her face, how white her lips, how thin and transparent her hands! Yet how full of life and colour and bright beauty she was but a little while since! It was only the other night she was playing Julia—and very prettily—with that Mr. Hooton, who, between you and me, is no better than a jackass, to my thinking. There was great promise about her Julia; and now—has

it come to this? Poor child, poor child! It makes my old heart ache to look at her."

Doris bore the removal much better than we had ventured to hope she would. It was, I think, rather a relief to her to quit the New-road—to cease watching for the postman, or contemplating the dreary mason's yard, with its tombstones and teagarden statues, its monotonous carving and shaping and sawing. She was, of course, much less alone now; there were always friendly faces about her. Kindly and comforting words only reached her ears. Everything possible was done to console and encourage her, to give her ease and rest and hope.

"How familiar it all seems to me!" she said. "I thought I had forgotten Somers-town—left it behind me altogether; yet I come back to it and find I know it so well! Why, The Polygon where we lived once—where we were born, I think—is only round the corner; and beyond are the streets that used to lead straight on to the green fields and the hills of Hampstead and Highgate. Do you remember, Basil, our long walks, our rambles about the streets here, and how you were one day lost for some hours, and brought back home again by Mr. Leveridge? What children we were then! How old we seem now!—for so many things have happened since. How sad we are now! how happy we were then!—at least we seem to have been happy, looking back from a distance. Yet we had our cares, and troubles, and sufferings, which were then hard enough to endure, very likely, although they were, in truth, trifles to the trials that have come upon us since—such as I have now to bear, for instance. Basil! I often think those are the happiest who die when they are young—very young."

I had seen Nick, for I thought it important that he should be informed of poor Doris's condition. But he was not in a very sympathetic mood—at least, with his sorrow for Doris there mingled a feeling almost of rejoicing that his unfavourable view of her marriage was now confirmed by the result.

"So that foreigner's run away and left us, has he? Not exactly? Well, but it seems to me that that is just what it comes to. I can't say I am surprised. I always had the very lowest opinion of the fellow. But it's Doris's own fault, you know. She broke her engagement to marry Mr. Leveridge—an excellent match for her—and

then she must needs bolt with this Riel, a wretched Frenchman of whom nobody knows anything. I'm sorry for her, of course, because I'm her brother; but I feel all the same that it serves her right, for it's entirely her own doing. She's brought all the mischief on herself. Of course he hadn't a halfpenny—Frenchmen never have. I daresay he grew tired of her; and I should not be at all surprised to hear that he had half-a-dozen other wives dispersed about the Continent. This comes of marrying a foreigner! I could have told Doris beforehand how it would all end, only she would not condescend to listen to me. She never would listen to good advice. She always thought herself so much wiser than everybody else. Well, it's a very pretty kettle of fish altogether. And what's to be done now, I wonder? If I were a hard sort of man I should tell her to shift for herself—that as she's made her bed so she must lie on it, and so forth. But I'm not exactly that kind of person. I think that relations should help each other when they can. I was always in favour of our sticking together and standing by each other. It's not my fault that things have happened so differently to what I hoped and intended. I'll do what I can for Doris. She is not in absolute want, I suppose?"

"Of course not," I answered, rather warmly. "Do you suppose I should allow her to suffer absolute want?"

"You needn't be angry, Basil, because that's never any sort of use with me. I did not know. It's never considered necessary to inform me of anything. I'm always left in the dark. Doris never thinks it worth while to write to me. I did not mean that while we were talking here she was without bread to put in her mouth. I never supposed that things had come to such a very bad pass as that. But I take it that she's no more money than she knows what to do with. And as for her acting, I suppose she's quite done with that. I should hope that she feels thoroughly ashamed of herself by this time. I don't mean to say that she isn't clever. People who are supposed to be good judges tell me that she played very well. I don't mind owning that I was myself in the theatre the night she played, and that she seemed to me to do what she had to do very creditably. But, as I understand from what you say, that's all over now. She's not well and strong enough, if she were ever so much inclined,

to venture upon the stage again. Well, then, the question arises—what is she going to do, and what does she expect us to do? Does she want a weekly allowance, and how much is the allowance to be? That's the shortest way of putting the matter. But perhaps I had better see her—though all this is a very annoying interruption to business, and I had arranged to go down to Chingford to-night. Where is she to be found?"

I explained that she had been moved to Somers-town.

"Oh, she's at the Grisdales', is she?" And I noticed a change come over Nick's face. "That's awkward. I did not want to go there if I could avoid it."

"Why not?"

"Well," he said, with flushed cheeks, "I can't think that Catalina has behaved to me quite as she ought to have done, and she's rather out of my good books."

I understood then that Catalina had rejected his suit.

"Not that it really matters, you know," he went on conceitedly; "for it happens now that I am thinking of other and more advantageous arrangements."

"Well, but if it doesn't matter, why not come to see Doris at the Grisdales'?"

He consented at last to waive all objections and to call in Somers-town. I took care to assure him that his resources should not be taxed in any way in support of Doris.

"I shall do what's right," he said sternly. "Have no fear on that score. I shall not forget that Doris is my sister. If she is in need of help from me she shall have it."

Concerning the fate of Paul Riel, Nick expressed no anxiety, or even curiosity. But he stated very plainly his regret that he had never carried out his original intention of breaking every bone in the Frenchman's body.

"And mind," he said, "any assistance we may render to Doris ought to be expressly upon condition that she has nothing more to do with that foreign fellow—that she has parted from him forever. I've no notion of my money going into his pocket. Doris must give him up altogether."

"He's her husband, remember."

"Then he should have stayed here and taken care of her, and worked to provide for her. That's our English way of doing things. Why couldn't the Frenchman do the same?"

With Mr. Grisdale, I discussed all the probabilities of Paul's case—the questions why he had not written, and what had become of him. Mr. Grisdale expressed deep interest in the matter.

"My dear boy," he said, "the case presents many difficulties, no doubt. I have been devoting a good deal of attention to it. You see, we have to bear specially in mind the object of Paul's going away. He went, let us agree, upon a political mission of a desperate and dangerous character. I am aware of so much, though I don't know, and I don't want to know, the exact particulars. That he has left England is, I think, beyond question. We may grant also that he landed in France. Now let us ask ourselves, was his project and his coming known to the French authorities? Did they take measures to arrest him immediately upon his landing? That is possible, of course. The French police are most energetic and most unscrupulous. They have spies everywhere. Knowing or suspecting his purpose, they would not hesitate to lay violent hands upon the young man. Closely prisoned, he would be unable to correspond with his friends here; or if he wrote, his jailers would take very good care to intercept his letters. His silence might be so accounted for, and reasonable enough; and I should be inclined to explain the matter in that way, but for one consideration."

Mr. Grisdale paused for a moment, as though embarrassed how to express himself adequately.

"We have this to take into the account," he resumed. "If Paul was watched and suspected by the police, he was also watched and suspected by his fellow-conspirators. For it is in the nature of conspirators to distrust each other. Nor should that be counted discreditable to them. Many lives may be at stake. A great cause may be in question. Men engaged in a secret enterprise of great moment are bound to be circumspect, upon system, lest all should be endangered by the perfidy or the weakness of one. We may be assured that his friends, not less than his foes, were waiting Paul Riel's arrival on the other side of the Channel—were closely observing his movements. Could the police arrest him without the knowledge of his fellow-conspirators? I think not. Well, I may say that his friends have no knowledge of his arrest. I have been in communication with certain agents in Paris, in whose good faith I can trust implicitly."

In reply to my enquiries, they have nothing to tell me on the subject of Paul Riel. You think the whole body of conspirators—both Paul and those watching for his coming—may have been arrested at one fell swoop and carried off to prison? have all gone, and left no trace behind them? That is not possible. So strong a measure could not be carried into execution without great stir and scandal. For the arrests would be very numerous, the excitement would be serious, and the newspapers would surely print information on the subject. The public could not be kept in the dark as to so grave a matter. Certainly the news of the arrests would travel to Paris, would be known to the chiefs of the conspiracy. No, that has not happened; I am fully convinced on that head."

Mr. Grisdale paused again; his difficulty in expressing himself seemed to increase.

"If we say that Paul is still at liberty, although for purposes of his own he chooses to keep silent and hidden, what then? We must consider the character of the man if we would find a clue to the mystery of his conduct. For my part, I am disposed to put faith in men. I have suffered in such wise, more frequently than I should like to say, but it is in my nature to go on trusting still. Of Paul Riel, I know, in truth, very little. I have a great difficulty in forming an opinion concerning him. He's a foreigner, and that increases the difficulty. I have no prejudice against foreigners; far from it, I like them. But I feel that I am often at sea as to the motives that govern them, their moods and ways, and habits of thought. We are not influenced as they are. We seem of a different constitution, both mental and physical. Well, I'll speak very plainly. I can't think Paul Riel a scoundrel—and you don't think so either, Basil."

"I do not, indeed."

"I'm glad to hear you say so; because, you know, there are many people who would pretend to read at the bottom of this mystery a simple explanation of that sort. But I'll not believe that he has wilfully abandoned your poor sister, so young and beautiful as she is, so devoted

to him—a wife a man might well be proud of—a woman to die for rather than desert. It can't be, Basil, it can't be. He is not capable of such villainy, and to Doris, his sweet young wife, of all people in the world. No, no, we won't believe that of him. Nor let us think of him," and here he lowered his voice almost to a whisper, "that he has betrayed his trust—that he has eluded the vigilance of his fellow-conspirators, and made terms with the authorities, who, to suit their own vile purposes, are keeping him close for a while. That can't be true either, can it, now? What do you say, Basil?"

"I say with you, that it cannot be true, Mr. Grisdale. Paul Riel could not stoop to such infamy. I would stake my life upon his integrity."

Mr. Grisdale shook me cordially by the hand as though congratulating me upon my confidence, the while I thought I perceived upon his face certain ominous shadows.

Either he distrusted Paul, or he felt serious apprehensions as to his fate.

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